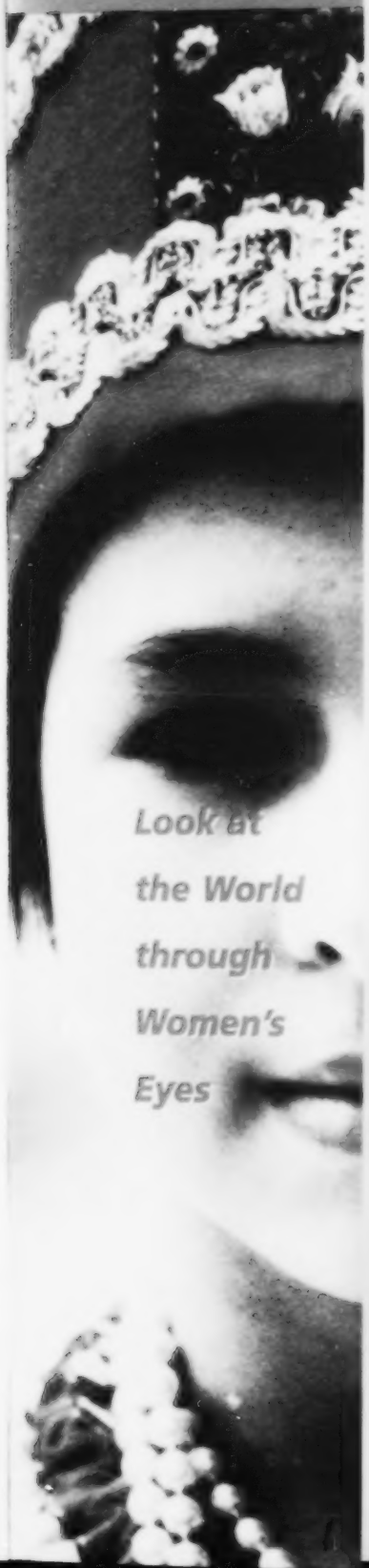
NGO Forum on Women



Look at the World through Women's Eyes

NGO Forum on Women '95

Through NGOs and their networks, "women have been able to voice their ideas, hopes and aspirations to shape their own lives and to participate fully in the development of society."

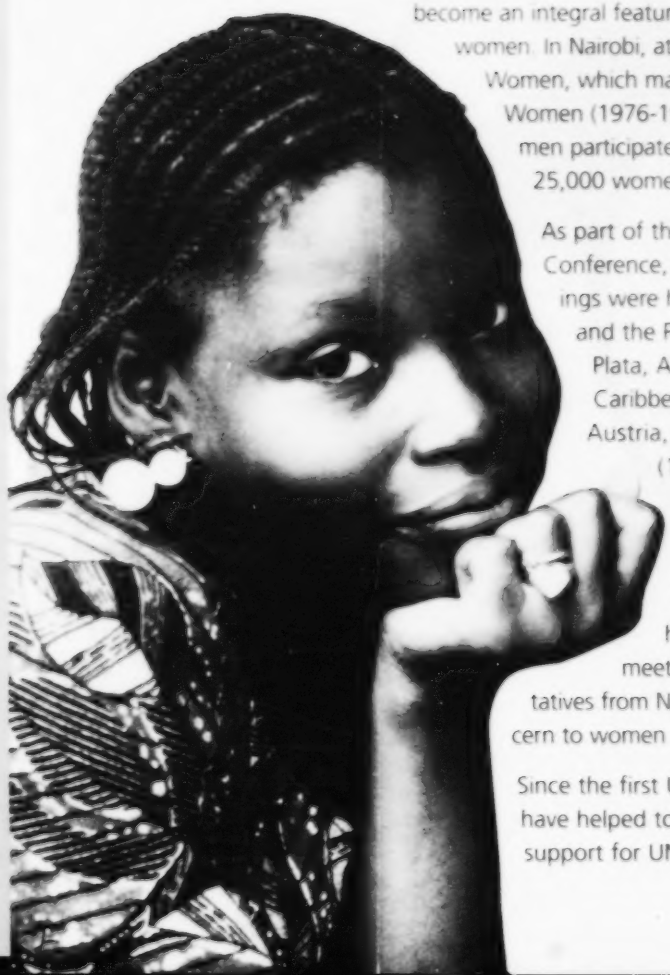
Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference, speaking at the NGO Consultation on the Beijing Conference in March 1994.

In September 1995, when women and men from around the world gather in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, many of them will represent non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They will be there to participate in the NGO Forum on Women '95, the parallel non-governmental meeting to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, convened by the United Nations, will be attended by Member States of the United Nations, as well as by representatives of organizations of the UN system, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and those NGOs accredited by the Commission on the Status of Women.

The NGO Forum on Women '95, a separate event, is open to all. Organized under the auspices of the NGO Forum Planning Committee, it will be held from 30 August to 8 September 1995 at the Beijing Workers' Sports Services Centre, a few miles from the Beijing International Conference Centre, where the World Conference will take place from 4 to 15 September 1995.

The NGO Forum, first organized in Mexico City in 1975 parallel to the first UN Conference on Women, has since become an integral feature of the world conferences on women. In Nairobi, at the Third UN Conference on Women, which marked the end of the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), as many as 15,000 women and men participated in the Forum. In Beijing, about 25,000 women and men are expected to attend.



As part of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference, five UN regional preparatory meetings were held: at Jakarta, Indonesia, for Asia and the Pacific (7-14 June 1994), Mar del Plata, Argentina, for Latin America and the Caribbean (25-29 September 1994), Vienna, Austria, for Europe and North America (17-21 October 1994), Amman, Jordan, for the Arab region (6-10 November 1994) and Dakar, Senegal, for Africa (16-23 November 1994). Regional NGO Forums were held prior to the UN preparatory meetings, where individuals and representatives from NGOs discussed issues of critical concern to women of the regions.

Since the first UN Conference on Women, NGOs have helped to mobilize national and international support for UN initiatives on issues related to

women. Through NGOs and their networks, "women have been able to voice their ideas, hopes and aspirations to shape their own lives and to participate fully in the development of society", said Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference. Speaking at the NGO Consultation on the Beijing Conference in March 1994, Mrs. Mongella said that NGOs had provided a forum for women from all walks of life to work together, to strategize, and to influence social, political and economic life.

"As we move into the next phase of Conference preparations, we should be proud of the achievements of the past and use them as a springboard to the next steps of action", said Mrs. Mongella.

Look at the world through women's eyes

The NGO Forum on Women '95 has two goals: to influence the Platform for Action which will be adopted by UN Member States at the Beijing Conference, and to hold a substantive and celebratory Forum highlighting women's vision and strategy for the world in the twenty-first century.

"As we prepare for Beijing, it is important to keep in mind that the Forum is both an event and a process", said Khunying Supatra Masdit, Convenor of the NGO Forum on Women '95.

The Forum has chosen the theme "Look at the world through women's eyes" for its preparatory activities. This theme will also provide the framework for the programme of activities being organized for the Forum in Beijing. "It is both reality and vision. It is at once today and the future. It is hope and strategy", said Irene M. Santiago, Executive Director of the NGO Forum. "NGOs will gather in Beijing to strategize toward creating an impact on the quality of human life in the twenty-first century", she noted.

Women and men taking part in the Beijing Forum will work across geographical boundaries and differences of race, age, ethnicity and culture, physical ability, sexual orientation, income and political affiliation. They will strengthen their partnership with men who have placed gender issues on their agenda. They will challenge Governments, media and other key institutions to look at the world through women's eyes, thereby expanding horizons for all people.

The Forum will provide an opportunity to assess the impact of women's advocacy and action since 1975, consolidate gains and build an effective strategy for the future. It will address the following key goals:

- A global commitment to women's equal rights
- Women's access to education, health care, employment and training, legal and political rights, economic development and a sustainable environment
- Women's participation at all levels of government and leadership
- Elimination of poverty
- Elimination of violence against girls and women
- Elimination of racism

Getting involved with the Forum

All individuals and NGOs who wish to participate in the NGO Forum on Women '95 are required to register with the NGO Forum on Women Office in New York. Individuals, regardless of organizational affiliation, must register individually by 30 April 1995.

Representatives of NGOs accredited for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women must register for the Forum if they wish to have access to the Forum. Similarly, registration for the Forum does not give NGOs access to the UN Conference. To obtain observer status to the UN Conference, NGOs have to be accredited. The deadline for applying for accreditation is 13 January 1995. For infor-

Women weaving the world together: Beijing 1995

Weaving is a skill common among women from around the world. They weave to generate income, but more than this, weaving expresses their lives, their love and their aspirations.

Women attending the the NGO Forum on Women '95 are invited to bring along with them hand-woven pieces. Each piece, made of any fibre (silk, linen, wool, jute, hemp, nylon or straw) should be approximately one metre wide and of any length. These will be stitched together into a ribbon of thousands of pieces, symbolizing the unity of women the world over.

All those interested in joining this global project should send their names to:

Khemara
Women Weaving
the World Together
National Road 5
Mittapheap Village
Russey Keo District
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel/Fax: 855-23-60134
or via 855-23-26009

mation on the accreditation process for the UN Conference, please contact: NGO Accreditation, Fourth World Conference on Women, 2 UN Plaza, Room 1204, New York, NY 10017, USA.

To support the participation of young activists, indigenous leaders, media professionals and women from countries that would not otherwise be able to attend such an important international gathering with their peers, the NGO Forum has established the "Send a Sister to Beijing Campaign". Contributions to the campaign should be sent to the NGO Forum on Women Office.

Forum activities

At the NGO Forum on Women '95, women and men from around the world will celebrate women's diversity, common ground and universal aspirations. Instead of discussing so-called "women's issues," participants will highlight women's proven ability to create solutions to the problems that face the world. For ten days, they will run workshops, seminars, plenaries, photo, art and film exhibitions, marketplaces, and a variety of cultural events.

The NGO Forum on Women Office is coordinating all on-site activities to be held during the Forum in Beijing. Due to space limitations, all organizations proposing an activity on-site are required to submit an official Activity Request Form to the NGO Forum on Women Office by 30 April 1995. This form can be obtained from the NGO Forum Office.

In addition to the space reserved for requested activities, the Forum will provide, free, a resource center where NGOs can display their information material, space dedicated to regions and themes, and a marketplace for handicrafts and goods. A limited number of booths and tents will also be available for rent.

All hotel reservations will be handled exclusively by the China Organizing Committee in Beijing. Hotels are located within a 15-kilometre radius of the Forum site. Hotel reservations will not be made if the individual is not registered for the Forum. Questions regarding hotel arrangements must be directed to:

The China Organizing Committee
No. 15 Jiangoumen Street
Beijing 100730
People's Republic of China
Fax: 861-522-5329

For further information on the NGO Forum on Women '95, please write to:

NGO Forum on Women Office
Suite 1500
211 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017, USA

Written in association with the
NGO Forum on Women '95 Office
Photos by John Isaac

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4-15 SEPTEMBER 1995
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ACTION FOR EQAULITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

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